

Bernard P. Thomas

Bernard P. Thomas (1918-1994)

Bernard P. Thomas was born near Sheridan, Wyoming in 1918 and died in 1994. He was a realist and painter of the life of the West. “Some of my happiest years,” he declared, “were also the ones most beneficial to my artwork. I slept on the ground alongside the outfit’s top hands. I heard their stories of wilder days, and I’m the one who believes the artist who has lived ‘it’ is the one who can put the right feel in his work. Nothing gripes me more than a Western illustration done by an Eastern illustrator who doesn’t know straight up about the west.” He was born to homesteaders, and went to a one-room schoolhouse. During his high school years he was an allstate football player. He lived close to the legendary cowboy artist, Bill Gollings. Bernard often mentioned that by just watching Gollings in his little studio made him more determined than ever to also become a cowboy artist. After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Art from Woodbury College in Los Angeles, California, he then served as a sergeant in the Third Army in World War II. General Patton sent him to the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris where he learned mural painting. One of his many monumental works was the ten by two hundred foot cyclorama mural in the South Dakota Fine Arts Center in Rapid City, South Dakota. His other accomplishments in murals include an eighty foot Western mural in a Rapid City bank and the “Autorama” in Florida that they deemed the largest three dimensional mural painted by one artist. He was a member of the National Society of Mural Painters, was profiled in Ainsworth’s The Cowboy in Art and Hassrick’s Western Painting Today, and had illustration published by the Western Horseman Magazine.

#43 Lufkin City Hall-1977-“A Sudden Disturbance”. Oil painting on board. Two frontiersmen seated around a fire in foreground. Indians on hill in background.